

*Assessing Effective Communication:
An Exploration of Reflective Writing
in University Studies 10*

ASSESSMENT AS RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM
March 4, 2015

Dallas Carter
Coordinator for Residential & Academic Initiatives
Vanessa Hauser
Associate Director for Residence Life
Housing & Residence Life
Division of Student Affairs

Divisional Student Learning Outcomes

- Appreciation of Human Differences
- Effective Written and Oral Communication
- Civic Responsibility & Engagement
- Confidence in One's Abilities
- Leadership & Teamwork
- Lifelong Learning & Personal Well-being
- Sense of Self and Impact on Others

•

•

USTU 10 Reflective Journal

Learning Outcome: Generate college level, written reflective work that illustrates intentional engagement with the prompt, makes insightful observations relating your experiences to course concepts, and effectively uses convincing examples.

Project Logistics

Before first day of class

- Selection of rubric and tailoring to USTU prompt
- Training and Calibration

During semester

- Rubrics were returned attached to each reflection with comments
- Rewrite required if scored “unacceptable”
- Scores of the first two assignments and the last two assignments were collected; however feedback was provided throughout the semester.

There were 7 sections of USTU 10 that participated in this assessment project with class size ranging between 5- 30.

All instructors were full time employees of the Division of Student Affairs.



Rubric Part 1

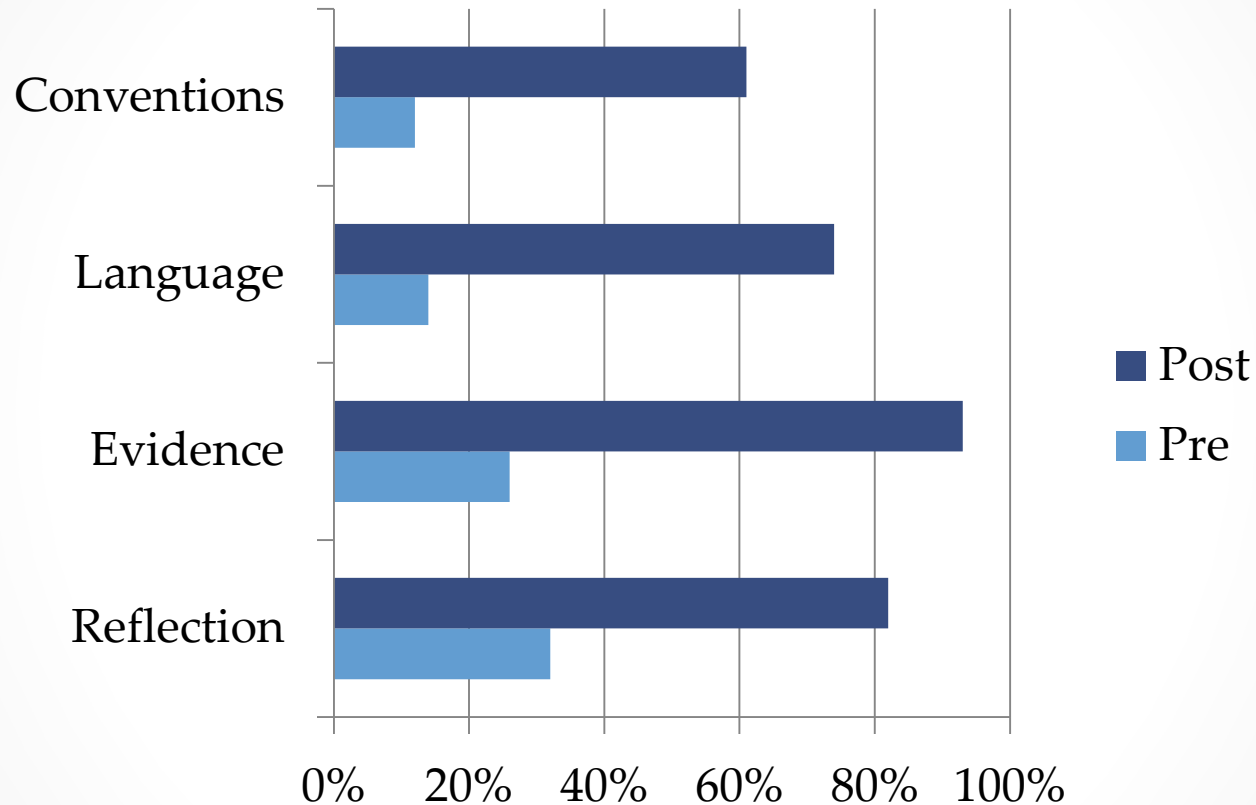
Skills	Highly Proficient (3)	Proficient (2)	Nearly Proficient (1)	Unacceptable (0)	Comments
Depth of reflection Score:	Demonstrates conscious and thorough understanding of the writing prompt and the subject matter. This reflection can be used as an example for other students.	Demonstrates thoughtful understanding of the writing prompt and the subject matter.	Demonstrates a basic understanding of the writing prompt and the subject matter.	Demonstrates little or no understanding of the writing prompt and the subject matter. This reflection needs revision.	
Use of textual evidence Score:	Uses specific and convincing examples from the texts studied or your life to support claims in own writing; makes insightful and relevant connections between texts and/or own life experiences.	Uses relevant examples from the texts studied or your life to support claims in your own writing; makes relevant connections between texts and/or own life experiences.	Uses general or vague examples from the text studied or your life to support some claims in your writing with some connections made between texts, and/or own life experiences.	Uses unconvincing, poorly specified examples or does not include examples at all; not able to support claims with connections between texts and/or own life experiences.	

Rubric Part 2

Skills	Highly Proficient (3)	Proficient (2)	Nearly Proficient (1)	Unacceptable (0)	Comments
Language use Score:	Uses stylistically sophisticated language that is precise and engaging, with notable sense of voice, awareness of audience and purpose, and varied sentence structure.	Uses language that is fluent, with evident a sense of voice, awareness of audience and purpose, and the ability to vary sentence structure.	Uses basic but appropriate language, with a basic sense of voice, some awareness of audience and purpose and some attempt to vary sentence structure.	Uses language that is either unsuitable and/or imprecise for the audience or purpose, with little or no sense of voice, and a limited awareness of how to vary sentence structure.	
Writing conventions Score:	Demonstrates control of academic writing conventions with essentially no errors, even with sophisticated language.	Demonstrates control of academic writing conventions, exhibiting occasional errors only when using sophisticated language.	Demonstrates partial control of academic writing conventions, exhibiting occasional errors that do not hinder comprehension.	Demonstrate little or no control of academic writing conventions, exhibiting frequent errors that make comprehension difficult.	

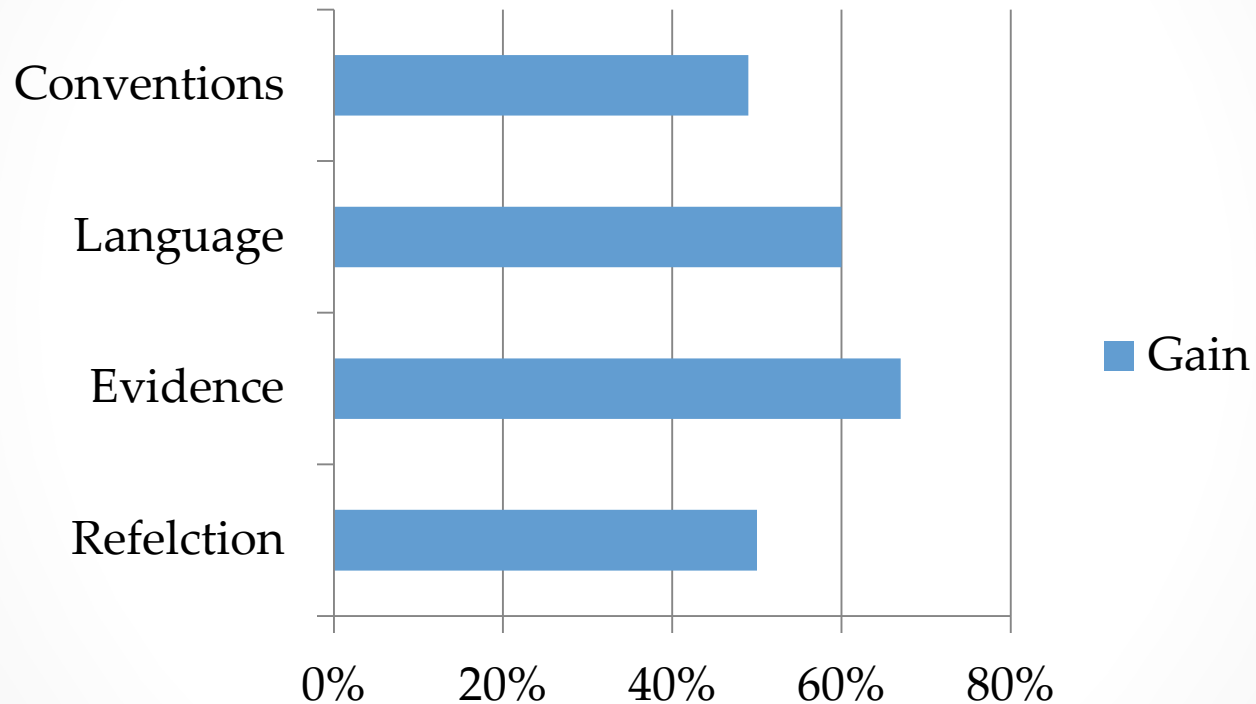
Adapted from NCTE, 2006

Percentage of Students Receiving “Proficient” or Better



Percentage of Growth

Gain



Themes from Final Writing Assignment

- Marked Improvement
- Role of Feedback
- Skills Gained
- Impact on Other Courses

Marked Improvement

- seen massive improvements in my writing.
- I started to see improvements in mainly my writing skills. Before, I was not that good of a writer, but after practice and practice writing journals, I became better.
- In this course, my writing was put to the test and in every journal I placed my best effort to raise my "Nearly Proficient" to a "Proficient."

Role of Feedback

- As I received poor feedback on my entries, I began to rethink my writing strategies
- **My instructor's comments every time I wrote a journal only made me a better writer. I know that without the comments and revisions, I would have not done as well as I did in my other classes.**
- Every comment she wrote on my paper had a big impact on my other writing assignments.
- I have improved greatly from the beginning when we started writing journals. This improvement was possible through my effort in noticing and applying my professor's feedback and reading those rubric boxes (descriptions).



Skills Gained

- After this semester, I would like to continue working on writing weekly essays because I found them to help improve my overall writing and has helped me to enjoy writing about personal experiences in general.
- An important factor I can identify is the new ability to write openly about my past experiences.
- The first writing assignment showed me what this class had to offer to me, at least in terms of writing. ... It allowed me to open up and experiment with different styles and tones of writing.



Impact on Other Courses

- My vocabulary usage goes beyond USTU. From the start of the fall semester to now, my essay grades in my Writing class have gradually increased.
- Still I want to keep improving my writing by using the skills I achieved in this course and applying them to my other courses.
- **I know that without the comments and revisions, I would have not done as well as I did in my other classes.**



Final Thoughts

- Labor intensive for the student and instructor
- Results demonstrated growth in the divisional learning outcome of effective communication
- USTU 10 is an opportunity to improve effective written communication skills
- Next Step: Individual student gains